Numb. CXXXV

The GUARDIAN

——————*meâ*
Virtute me involvo—————— Hor.

Saturday, Auguſt 15. 1713.

A Good Conſcience is to the Soul what Health is to the Body: It preſerves a conſtant Eaſe and Serenity within us, and more than countervails all the Calamities and Afflictions which can poſſibly befall us. I know nothing ſo hard for a generous Mind to get over as Calumny and Reproach, and cannot find any Method of quieting the Soul under them, beſides this ſingle one, of our being conſcious to ourſelves that we do not deſerve them.

I have been always mightily pleaſed with that Paſſage in *Don Quixote*, where the fantaſtical Knight is repreſented as loading a Gentleman of good Senſe with Praiſes and Elogiums. Upon which the Gentleman makes this Reflection to himſelf: How graceful is Praiſe to Human Nature! I cannot forbear being ſecretly pleaſed with the Commendations I receive, tho' I am ſenſible 'tis a Mad-man beſtows them on me. In the ſame manner, tho' we are often ſure that the Cenſures which are paſſed upon us are uttered by thoſe who know nothing of us, and have neither Means nor Abilities to form a right Judgment of us, we cannot forbear being grieved at what they ſay.

In order to heal this Infirmity, which is ſo natural to the beſt and wiſeſt of Men, I have taken a particular Pleaſure in obſerving the Conduct of the old Philoſophers, how they bore themſelves up againſt the Malice and Detraction of their Enemies.

The way to ſilence Calumny, ſays *Bias*, is to be always exerciſed in ſuch Things as are Praiſe-worthy. *Socrates*, after having received Sentence, told his Friends, that he had always accuſtomed himſelf to regard Truth and not Cenſure, and that he was not troubled at his Condemnation becauſe he knew himſelf free from Guilt. It was in the ſame Spirit that he heard the Accuſations of his two great Adverſaries, who had uttered againſt him the moſt virulent Reproaches. *Anytus* and *Melitus*, ſays he, may procure Sentence againſt me, but they cannot hurt me. This Divine Philoſopher was ſo well fortified in his own Innocence, that he neglected all the Impotence of evil Tongues which were engaged in his Deſtruction. This was properly the Support of a good Conſcience, that contradicted the Reproaches which had been raiſed againſt him, and gave him to himſelf.

Others of the Philoſophers rather choſe to retort the Injury, by a ſmart Reply, than thus to diſarm it with reſpect to themſelves. They ſhew, that it ſtung them, tho', at the ſame time, they had the Addreſs to make their Aggreſſors ſuffer with them. Of this kind was *Ariſtotle*'s Reply to one who purſued him with long and bitter Invectives. You, ſays he, who are uſed to ſuffer Reproaches, utter them with Delight; I, who have not been uſed to utter them, take no Pleaſure in hearing them. *Diogenes* was ſtill more ſevere on one who ſpoke ill of him. No Body will believe you when you ſpeak ill of me any more than they would believe me ſhould I ſpeak well of you.

In theſe, and many other Inſtances I could produce, the Bitterneſs of the Anſwer ſufficiently teſtifies the Uneaſineſs of Mind the Perſon was under who made it. I wou'd rather adviſe my Reader, if he has not in this caſe the ſecret Conſolation that he deſerves no ſuch Reproaches as are caſt upon him, to follow the Advice of *Epictetus*. If any one ſpeaks ill of thee, conſider whether he has Truth on his ſide; and if ſo, reform thyſelf that his Cenſures may not affect thee. When *Anaximander* was told, that the very Boys laughed at his Singing; Ay, ſays he? then I muſt learn to Sing better. But of all the Sayings of Philoſophers which I have gathered together for my own Uſe on this Occaſion, there are none which carry in them more Candour and good Senſe than the two following ones of *Plato*. Being told that he had many Enemies who ſpoke ill of him, 'Tis no matter, ſaid he, I'll live ſo that none ſhall believe 'em. Hearing at another time, that an Intimate Friend of his had ſpoken deractingly of him; I am ſure he would not do it, ſays he, if he had not ſome Reaſon for it. This is the ſureſt, as well as the nobleſt way of drawing the Sting out of a Reproach, and the true

Uſe

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